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bronze-like quality and patina of the bluish gray basalt in which it is executed, give the head the character of a work of nature. The head is probably somewhat earlier than the large statue, and belongs, very likely, to the sixth century.

W. R. V.

#### A GIFT OF JAPANESE SWORD GUARDS

JAPANESE tsuba, or sabre guards, have ever appealed to the lover of Eastern art. They are exquisite in design and workmanship, beautiful in color and contour, and picture in miniature a wide range of the artistic history of Japan. That they have ever been numerous—and this is not always a trial to an earnest collector—one can well understand, for in the feudal days of Japan each member of the military class carried his familiar two swords, and for each sword he had a choice of tsuba, rarely less than a dozen and sometimes even hundreds, which could be changed to vary the appearance of his treasured blades from day to day, or month to month. If, then, we estimate that there were two millions of samurai in 1876, when prime-minister Sanjo signed the decree forbidding the carrying of swords, we may assume that tens of millions of sword guards came sooner or later into trade. It is certainly a fact that about 1880 the markets of all "curio"-loving countries were flooded with sword guards, and that never before or since have such admirable specimens, in any number at least, found their way out of Japan.

On the other hand, it must not be supposed that Japanese gentlemen ceased in a moment to prize an ancestral sword guard, when they had no longer the need of wearing swords. It was merely that at this time they revised their collections, and cast out those tsuba to which they were least attached. In the majority of cases in which they gave up a costly specimen, it appeared to be the latest or newest which found its way to a shop in Kyoto or Tokyo.

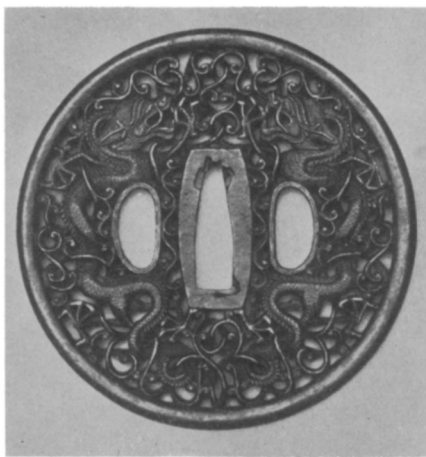
It was the feeling, doubtless, that the newer sword guards were of higher grade which led Mrs. Adrian H. Joline to special-

ize in her collecting. In the eighty odd examples which she has just presented to the museum one finds types which are excellent, and which are particularly acceptable since the museum has had, up to the present, no series of tsuba of its own. The only important examples hitherto shown have been borrowed, e. g., from the collections of Mr. Howard Mansfield and Mr. Malcolm MacMartin.

The present donation, then, forms a comfortable foundation for the study of a highly specialized branch of Japanese art. It enables a visitor to appreciate the work of some of the best schools or families of tsuba artists, including Kaneiyé, Goto, Miochin, Tetsuwo, Umétada, Soten, Shōami, and Kinai, and it gives many of the varieties of guards which each collector comes to recognize. Thus it furnishes types of sculptured guards in iron, copper, and various bronzes. It includes a series of guards incrustated with designs in other metals, as bronze on steel, or silver on bronze. As an instance of the former, we recall a small tsuba in the style of the first Nishigaki master, Kanshiro Yoshihiro (1613-93). The collection contains a number of guards in which the figures or patterns are inset or inlaid, rather than incrustated, notably several with inlays of pewter in the style of the fourteenth or fifteenth century. It also illustrates pierced guards in great variety: some in the fashion of four centuries ago when the decoration was carried out broadly, some in the style of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which perforations became so numerous and intricate as to transform a tsuba into a disk of interlacing fibres, as in the work of the artists who followed the Chinese manner. Other guards exemplify the work of essentially modern schools. There are a number showing a background of delicate stippling which the Japanese called "nanako" (a pattern suggested by the texture of fish roe), and which was in vogue in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. One of these is a "composite" guard, the figures which it bears in relief having been executed by three different artists, Koran, Ichijo, and Tojo: its theme is the varying beauties



SWORD GUARD IN THE STYLE OF  
KANSHIRO YOSHIHIRO (1613-93)



SWORD GUARD WITH PIERCED DECORATION  
IN CHINESE STYLE. 18TH CENTURY



SWORD GUARD BY TAKECHIKA  
ABOUT 1850



SWORD GUARD WITH "NANAKO"  
BACKGROUND, DATED 1829

of spring, summer, and autumn, the first typified by fireflies, the second by butterflies, the third by a dragon fly. Another "nanako" guard bears the date 1829 and is decorated with a dragon finely sculptured in gold bronze. We may refer also to a dragon tsuba by Takechika, of even later date—about 1850—which is an admirable specimen of its kind: here the storm-monster appears in bold relief, emerging from a swirl of waves. We note, finally, one of the newest guards (dated 1861), an excellent example of the fine-spun taste in sword mounting at the time of the breaking down of the Tokugawa shogunate. In this tsuba the background is incised with undulating lines, representing low waves, and it is surcharged with crests of the daimyo Arima. Noteworthy in this specimen is the decadent treatment of its margin, which is overlaid by the same crests moulded as though flexible around the rim of the guard.

B. D.

## RENAISSANCE SCULPTURES

THE Museum has added two important works to the collection of Renaissance sculptures: a terracotta group by Benedetto da Majano, representing the Pietà, and a marble relief, formerly in the Aynard Collection, by Agostino di Duccio. Both artists, it is needless to say, belong among the greatest masters of the Quattrocento. Their character is shown with remarkable force in these two works.

Benedetto da Majano is, with Mino da Fiesole, the last of the Florentine sculptors of the fifteenth century, and in his style he seems to have tried to combine the achievements of the great artists of this century. He shows the realism of Donatello in his portrait busts; he has much of the charm and refinement of Antonio Rossellino in some of his Madonnas and his children, as in the bust of Saint John owned by the Metropolitan Museum; he is not far away from the sincerity and religious feeling of Luca della Robbia or Matteo Civitale. Like all facile, eclectic art, his is not of the same force as that of a master

who makes a fresh start in a new direction. He has not quite the depth of feeling of Donatello or Luca della Robbia, nor the exquisiteness of the best works of Rossellino, but his nature is so harmonious and well balanced that he always produces works of great beauty and refined and graceful expression, even if he does not reach the height of great genius. In his well-balanced, simple style he becomes, however, the precursor of the Cinquecento.

The motive of our terracotta group reminds one at once of one of the first great sculptures by Michelangelo, the Pietà in St. Peter's, a composition which was executed about 1498, a few years after this one of Benedetto de Majano. The terracotta group is a late work by Benedetto, who died in 1497, and shows the highest development of his art, if one can speak of "development" in such a short career. Benedetto's Pietà is, however, not the only one produced during the few years preceding Michelangelo's. Similar compositions were favored by painters as well as by sculptors at the end of the Quattrocento. It has rightly been pointed out by Dr. Bode that it was very possibly Savonarola who influenced the artists of Florence during these years to select motives of this kind. Giovanni della Robbia modeled in clay several times the four-figure composition of the Pietà, the group in Berlin being especially similar to ours. Another Florentine master who comes very near to Benedetto da Majano composed a deeply expressive group of smaller compass, now in Mr. Johnson's collection in Philadelphia. Regarding paintings, we need only remind one of the beautifully balanced composition by Perugino in the Munich Pinacothek. Among all these, however, the one owned by the Museum is probably the earliest, as is shown by the difference in the size of the figures: the Virgin is almost life-size, the other three figures are considerably smaller. The artists would hardly have gone back to this somewhat unbalanced proportion, after they had adopted the same size for all figures.

The figures of the Virgin and the Magdalen are full of dignity and expression